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THE MENTAL DUET

By ARTHUR S. PHELPS

Are there a masculine and a feminine mind? Do men and women differ by nature? If their eyes catch the same picture, do their brains offer the same impression to the mind? Modern psychology tells us that the influence of the brain over the mind is enormous. The materialist declares that this influence is determinative,—indeed, that thought is only as a mist rising on the surface of the cerebellum. While sane philosophy generally rejects this view, it still recognizes that bodily conditions, and particularly the cells in the brain, exert a powerful influence upon ratiocination, that they produce habits of thought. And through thought, action. And through action, destiny.

Animal life began most simply. The amoeba, at maturity, parted in twain. His children were all twins. His type increased by arithmetical progression. Biology tells us that sex was first determined by nourishment. The best nourished individuals became females, the more meagre, males. This achievement of the Creator's evolutionary process required millenniums of natural selection. The "Little Carpenter," as Huxley charmingly pictures the unseen life-force, works very slowly. But none the less surely, and progressively.

And thus there grew up what we may call the distributive and the secretive temperaments. Nourishment still dominates. These temperaments are the masculine and the feminine genius, respectively. Science names them katabolism and anabolism. They are the spending and hoarding faculties in nature's economy. The masculine element is a constant tearing down and wasting away. The feminine element is receptive, edificative. Anthropology has written the history of these bipolar, reciprocal forces. Competition declares it to be a duel. Antagonism. Co-operation proves it to be a duet. The novel has popularized this story of the katabolic and anabolic temperaments in man and woman. Man lays himself at woman's feet; she accepts him. Some one has said that the story of every novel is, "She was beautiful and he fell in love." How little the hero and heroine know that the eternal sweep of agelong destiny has conveyed heart to heart across meeting lips! The very stars fight for them—particularly the moon.

What term has psychology to mark the difference in mental processes betwixt the man and the woman. Katabolism it calls reason; anabolism it calls intuition. Reason is the sacrificial, the fighting temper of the mind. Intuition is the receptive temper. The one hunts truth; the other entertains it. The instrument of the former is logic. The instrument of the latter is feeling. Logic contains two elements, inductive and deductive. Intuition contains two elements, instinct and imagination.

This mental distinction had its origin in natural causes. The male was stronger physically than the female, and could force his ideas and her submission. Finding physical superiority denied her, woman, through generations of submission, has gradually built up a matchless weapon of defence. It is her intuition. The processes of reason

are slower. Man has had time, given him by his physical superiority, to develop his conclusions by inductive and deductive reasoning. Against the invincible arm of the male animal, rose the quick wit of the female animal. It was her only defence.

Who shall say to-day which mental method is superior, the man's or the woman's? Is reason a higher faculty than intuition? Is intuition more sure than reason? Man suspects the conclusions of woman's intuition, because they are so rapid. She suspects the conclusions of man's reasoning, because it is so slow. If either be higher than the other, then one sex is more advanced in the evolutionary process than its companion. They are twin elements. They are parallel streams from the same spring. Each is found in its measure in the well balanced mind. But the predominating faculty of man is reason. Of woman it is intuition. That is why they cannot take each other's place in the world. That is why a normal woman cannot serve on a jury. That is why a man cannot say the last word on moral issues. For the one, reason is demanded; for the other, intuition. The two temperaments are mutually reciprocal. There is a large sphere of truth—perhaps half of it—open to reason. There are great continents of truth, the large domain of metaphysics, that reason cannot explore without the lantern of intuition.

While we think of the masculine and feminine minds as diverse, one doing its work with the tool of reason, the other with the tool of feeling, yet they are one in their origin; one in their conclusions, though differing in their methods. Man and woman, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow, like children in the night in a great and trackless forest, set their faces toward the golden gates of the Temple of Truth, their faces lighted by hope, their steps made strong by mutual encouragement, their hearts guided by the divine wisdom of the unseen Father.